



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

February 25, 2009

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## **OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS URGED TO BE AWARE OF TICKS** ***Ticks May Carry Lyme Disease, Tularemia; County Urges Caution While Hiking***

County Vector Control officials warn outdoor enthusiasts to be aware of ticks while enjoying outdoor activities in our local parks and open spaces. Ticks are common in San Diego, November through April.

"Ticks can carry Lyme disease, tularemia, or other diseases," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., County of San Diego Public Health Officer. "These diseases can affect a person's health for months or even years."

"To avoid Lyme disease or other tick-borne illnesses, people who work or play in grassy or brushy areas need to take special care to avoid picking up ticks," said Gary Erbeck, Director, County Department of Environmental Health. "We recommend using insect repellent to prevent ticks and other insects from biting. Flea and tick control products should also be used on pets."

Ticks get tularemia by biting infected rodents, rabbits and other animals. Symptoms of tularemia in humans include lymph node swelling, headache and fever, skin ulcer at the site of the bite, fatigue, body aches, nausea, and even death in rare cases. Tularemia also can be transmitted by handling or eating infected meat, or drinking water contaminated by an infected animal.

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease spread by the bite of a Western black-legged tick. It usually starts with a circular rash at the site of the tick bite. Flu-like symptoms and joint aches may follow. If detected early, the disease can be treated with antibiotics. Without treatment, symptoms including arthritis, severe headache, temporary muscle paralysis of facial muscles, and possible development of heart disease may persist in the human body for several years. Tularemia and Lyme disease are not transmitted person to person.

### **Tick Prevention Tips:**

- Stay on marked wide trails, and walk in the center to avoid grass or brushy areas.
- Wear light-colored long sleeved clothing, tuck shirts into pants, and pants into socks or boots.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing and footwear.
- Check clothing, body and companions for ticks frequently.
- Remove ticks immediately. Grasp the head of ticks with tweezers; pull straight out using a firm, steady motion.
- Clean the bite area with antiseptic.
- Ticks may be submitted to Vector Control for identification.
- Treat pets with insecticide powders or sprays labeled for tick control and keep them on a leash.

For more information on tick-borne diseases and prevention, visit [www.SDVector.com](http://www.SDVector.com).

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